GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1336
ANSWERED ON:25.07.2016
Free Trade Agreements
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Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government has taken steps to spread awareness amongst the business community about Free Trade Agreements (FTAs) and the possible benefits to them in order to boost trade;
(b) if so, the details thereof;
(c) whether a number of agricultural products are being imported into the country by utilising provisions of these FTAs;
(d) if so, the details thereof; and
(e) whether the Government proposes to support farmers in distress due to FTAs and if so, the details thereof?

Answer

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (INDEPENDENT CHARGE)
(SMT. NIRMALA SITHARAMAN)

(a)&(b): With a view to effectively disseminate information on the Free Trade Agreements(FTAs) signed by India as well as to feed into the process of review of these FTAs, the Department of Commerce regularly conducts FTA outreach programmes across the country. Ten outreach programmes, were conducted in 2013-14 and nine outreach programmes in 2014-15 at different location of the country. The participants in these outreach programmes were primarily exporters and importers in that region. The focus of these outreaches was on the major FTAs signed by India, namely the ASEAN-India Trade in Goods Agreement; the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreements (CEPA) with Japan and Korea and the Comprehensive Economic Cooperation Agreement (CECA) with Malaysia. The FTA outreach exercise was continued during 2015-16 with the focus on around 34 industrial clusters so as to provide the requisite information to the smaller and medium enterprises on the opportunities that could be availed under the FTAs.

(c) to (e): In order to protect the interests of agriculture sector, the agreements provide for maintaining sensitive/negative lists of items on which limited or no tariff concessions are granted under the FTA. The Government has largely adopted a conservative policy on agricultural products by maintaining a large number of them in the negative list of FTAs. In this context, inputs are obtained from stakeholders including administrative ministries. The government remains open to considering any specific issues concerning the agricultural sector including producers.

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